RAIS Journal for Social Sciences | VOL. 8, No. 1, 2024
ISSN 2574-0245 (Print) | ISSN 2574-1179 (Online) | DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.11243141

The Gospel and the Impact of Eschatology on the Life of Society

Florin MATEI

PhD(c), Aurel Vlaicu University of Arad, Romania, mateiflorin07@gmail.com

ABSTRACT: Eschatology played an important role in shaping the life of society and the stability of the Roman Empire. Its role was to shape society, but also to form social identities. When examining the history of the first century, we see how three eschatologies intersect: Jewish, imperial, and Christian, each with its own social, political, economic and also religious goals. Christian eschatology, of those listed, proposes a new understanding at the social level in the way it redefines human identity in preparation for the parousia, but also to define how Christians will perform their social duties in a hostile environment. The apostle Paul's understanding, through the use of the metaphor of adoption, will offer new eschatological and social identity perspectives for Christians living in a social setting marked by rival identities, but will also offer perspectives that go beyond the earthly sphere.

KEYWORDS: identity, church, eschatology, social, parousia

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is not to present the eschatological conceptions of the entire religious history of thought (Erikson 2010, 983-1003; Walls 2010), but rather to understand how first-century eschatology functioned at the societal level. The goal is to create an overview of how it alters or transforms the social, political and economic components of society, but it is also worth noting the evolution of this thought when it interacts with certain streams of thought specific to a particular historical period and how it allows itself to be shaped or influenced by them.

The transformation of society and eschatology

Eschatological thinking has been part of the social structure of all ancient and modern societies, so it is natural to observe it in the early history of the Christian Church. It is motivated in its missionary thrust by these eschatological expectations, and these have to do with the social context of the first century and the urgency born of these expectations, as personal and collective problems to be solved in the distant or near future. The Apostle Peter, taking up the prophecy of Joel (2:28-29), when preaching on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:16-12), already adds that from his point of view, this prophecy is in progress because we are in the last days. Biblical thought has this eschatological thinking at its center in the first Christian century (Menn 2018). The events of the time are interpreted in accordance with the eschatological view.

Speaking of an essential component of eschatology, Prof. Laurențiu Moț tells us that it functioned as an interpretative framework of the times. “The imminence of the *Parousia* is generally fed by indicators of a geographical nature (wars, conflicts), religious (false prophets, anti-hristians), sanitary (plagues, pestilences) and by vagaries of nature (earthquakes, famines)” (Moț 2022, 228). From this point of view, important events that

occur in a society are understood through this lens. This should come as no surprise, as we are also talking here about a psychological factor that acts and gives meaning to events insofar as they fit into a frame of reference (Măcelaru 2011, 167-173; 2012, 27-79; 2018, 27-34). Thus, the present is interpreted through the future, which offers optimism and hope. In this way, we distinguish a first sense of eschatology, in which a certain kind of future is anticipated through present events.

Although we have this framework within which the world should be understood, Fredriksen (2023, 115) speaks of an important paradoxical stage through which the Christian church of the first century passed, namely that we are not only dealing with a means by which the meaning of the world is understood, but we can also speak of an ethic that motivates certain concrete actions. It says thus: "With these new or newly expanded messianic interpretations of Jesus, the community was finally able to formulate a plan of action, different from the passive expectation of the kingdom." The main activity of the first-century church had at its center *didache* and *kerygma* (Caemmerer 1961; Oprean 2014, 203), preaching the message that Christ will return. This is how we can justify the way the early Christians considered that society should be prepared for Christ's coming in glory. As the early church grappled with the inexplicable delay of Christ's return, new understandings of the role Christians should play in the good of society emerged. The eschatology of the early centuries underwent constant evaluation out of a desire to adapt to the challenges within society, but also the need for Christians to remain connected to Christ's future kingdom. This bottleneck was overcome, as Petry (1956, 75) explains, when they saw things from a different perspective, in a new light, namely that "the world of Christian brotherhood in the next world, of which His disciples long to be a part, must be the determining ideal for the society in which they themselves are helping to establish on this earth."

Theological thinking and eschatology

Throughout this formative period of the Christian church, looking at the life of the apostle Paul, we also see in the right of his efforts generated an ethic of violence in relation to the eschatology that defined his convictions. Wright speaks of important eschatological expectations based on Daniel's prophecies, placing the Jerusalem Temple and the Torah at the centre of Jewish hopes. To this belief, Wright (2020, 29-30) adds, "It was vital for Jews to observe the Torah with rigorous attention to detail and to defend the Torah and the Temple itself against possible attacks and threats. Failure on these points will hold up the promise, will stand in the way of the fulfillment of the great story. Therefore he persecuted them." J.H. Wright (2016, 376) also develops this theme of Jewish eschatology - he talks about the centrality of important Jewish elements at the heart of eschatology of this kind, such as the rebuilt Temple, David's restored kingdom, and then the Gentiles who can be saved. We thus observe in the first century at least two conflicting eschatologies. One is a young, nascent eschatology, which by its creed embraces "all the world," and one has a geographically and socially limited understanding, but is sufficiently powerful and deeply rooted because it aims at the restoration of a nation that was under foreign domination. Christian eschatology has been in conflict with various pagan ideologies. It is not only in Judea that we see such a conflict, but also in the rest of the Empire we see the promotion of a Christian-type eschatology that proposes a paradigm shift, when in ancient societies cataclysms were closely linked to a religious framework dominated by gods who showed their disapproval of what was happening among humans. This explanation is a referential one for how pagan societies functioned at that time. The good of society was marked by the relationship between people and local deities, spirituality and religiosity were the

primary way in which people secured the goodwill of the gods, and the gods were seen as having a socially determining role as well as a role in influencing events. It is in this context—in which the worship of the gods was essential—that the Christian view of the 'network of synagogue communities in the Diaspora' comes into play. They (Christians) asked Jewish listeners not for a significant adjustment of religion, but for a change of perspective. The God of Israel, they proclaimed, was about to end history" (Fredriksen 2023, 166). It was not only a change of perspective related to relating to the deity, but also that they encouraged "some behaviors, such as insistence on repentance, immersion in water in the name of Jesus for deliverance from sins, receiving the Holy Spirit, were truly new" (Fredriksen 2023, 166).

Not to be omitted from the larger landscape of first-century eschatologists is the Roman understanding of the future. Although sibylline oracles were the main means, they turned to for knowledge of the future, the greatest fear of the ruling structures of the Roman Empire had to do with how they related to the prophecies circulating in the empire. These could destabilize the smooth running of Roman society (Balsdon 1979, 190), and as such, imperial eschatology, with the Roman Emperor at its center, addresses some of these shortcomings. This eschatology should be understood in terms of prosperity, wealth and health, as a result of loyalty to the Roman emperor, but also as a result of the fact that the imperial cult was supported by people of high social status, and thus they received 'blessings' that those in the lower social strata of Roman society would also benefit from. This is how social prosperity was seen at the time (Witherington III 1995, 295, 297). As a result of this understanding the imperial eschatological view supported and legitimized a certain social order that led to the stability of the Roman Empire, but it also affected the way the Christian church in the empire functioned socially because a certain social order was valued that was based on how people perceived themselves in relation to others. In this social, economic, and political context, Paul presents his Christian eschatology which brings to the fore a different understanding of human relations, not one based on favoritism and opportunities for social advancement.

> Paul...associates salvation not with the coming of Caesar but with the return of Christ. It is no accident that when Paul addresses Christians in the Roman cities of Corinth and Philippi, he emphasizes most strongly that from Christ one does and will receive the benefits of real salvation. He refers to Christ's parousia in 1 Cor. 15:23 as opposed to Caesar's appearance and to Christ subduing all kings and kingdoms when he comes (1 Cor. 15:24), as opposed to Caesar's boasting that he has already done so in imposing the pax Romana. Paul counters this propaganda with his own brand of "already ... not yet" Christianity. For Paul, the right order (cf. 1 Cor.15:23) that really matters is in "Christ". This is the only kind of social order that should really matter to Christians, not society's classification systems. The Corinthians should be concerned to be found "in Christ" when he returns, not to be found among the social elites of Corinthian society (Witherington III 1995, 297).

In this way, the apostle Paul criticizes the social and political structure of the Roman Empire by suggesting that loyalty and spiritual power should not be linked to an earthly political and social structure. The call that the Apostle Paul makes is primarily about the spiritual dimension and not so much about social privileges gained in a way that affects the church and relationships within it. The above situation is not limited to cities like Philippi and Corinth. Witherington III, speaking of Thessalonica, says:

> It was an important city in many ways. It was the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia. For its support of Octavian, it became a free city in 42 BC and was not made a Roman colony. It minted its own coins (both imperial and autonomous), had its own form of government, but still had close ties to Rome and there is evidence of imperial worship in this city. This can be particularly highlighted in the coins with Julius Caesar's head, minted just before the time of Christ, which implied recognition

> of Julius as a god, and the fact that Augustus replaced Zeus on the coins in the city. These coins reflect the continued blessings that Rome bestowed on Thessalonica, on which the city had apparently come to depend, and the rise of imperial theology and imperial eschatology that was part of the rhetoric of response in such a city. The essence of this theology was that the emperor was the universal saviour whose benefactions and help should be proclaimed as good news throughout the world (Witherington III 1998, 503).

What is new about this view is that we are not just dealing with loyalty or a form by which we can observe the political recognition Rome enjoyed from the various cities of the ancient world, but also that the emperor of Rome was seen as a messiah. In this well-defined Roman theology of a secular type, those who showed loyalty to the emperor were granted benefits, protection and various privileges that were seen as divine gifts (Mocanu and Ștefănică 2010, 69-90). Thus, through the various cities throughout the Roman Empire, we see the spread of the imperial eschatological message that had the messianic figure of the emperor of Rome at its center. On a deeper level, we see a conflict of eschatologies taking place on a social level, and this was causing concern among the elites of the Roman Empire. Balsdon (1979, 190) talks about the difficulties Rome had in trying to prevent the spread of alarmist messages about a historical end to the Roman Empire. They had difficulty controlling the spread of these messages because there were dissident populations who embraced them, such as Jews and Christians. They were capitalizing on their spread and using them to propose their own interpretation.

Social transformation and the new (missionary) horizons of Christianity

It is the eschatological foundation that shapes the future of the Christian church and its identity. There is no identity without eschatology. The relationship between the two establishes that identity is not rooted in the realities of the world and that Christian faith is rooted in a heavenly reality. The two planes of existence shape Christian behavior. "The reality that this world is temporary and that the Christian's true identity is in heaven helps Christ's disciples understand their place in the world and impels them to speak of eternal realities.... Belief in the temporariness of this world and in the work of the Holy Spirit are thus two fundamental beliefs for the maturation of faith" (Rheenen 1996, 149).

Moltmann (1967, 67) tells us how the relationship between eschatology and identity operates: 'Only in his coming out into the world does man experience himself. Without objectification no experience of self is possible. Man's understanding of himself is always social, material and historically mediated." Since eschatology proposes a human identity related to a transcendent dimension, the present is seen as meaningful because it has the power to shape and transform. Thus, eschatological identity has the capacity to influence the present. If we are to refer to what Moltmann says, we see that the Christian is in a permanent relationship of evaluation and reporting between the two dimensions in which he believes and lives: the present and the future. Understood from another point of view, he suggests that because of having this eschatological identity, the Christian can engage in social life because the experience of self-awareness takes place in this space and that the self-understanding of the individual and the community takes place only in the context of an interaction of a social nature, therefore we observe a close relationship between the Christian eschatological identity and social engagement which has among other things the role of shaping new perspectives on the present and the future.

Eschatology and social ethics in first-century thought

Schreiner (2011, 812), in the book *New Testament Theology*, discusses this delicate relationship between the social world of the time and the theology that the early Christians

took from Jesus Christ. The central claim of the whole argument he builds is that from the beginning, "for all who believe in Jesus Christ, everything is influenced by eschatology." Schreiner sees this interplay as extremely complex, challenging, and at the same time extremely challenging in terms of the impact Christianity can create. Of these believers, he says that they live in the tension of "already" and "not yet," one that emphasizes that some of the promises and realities of salvation have already taken place through Jesus Christ, while others are to take place in the imminent future. In this context of this eschatological tension the experience of believers is marked by an understanding, recognition, and awareness of evil on the individual and social level, but at the same time, by an anchoring in the promises promised by Jesus Christ. Regardless of the historical period to which we refer, believers can neither deny nor ignore the negative realities taking place in society, but at the same time they recognize that the risk of being overwhelmed by the realities of evil is increased. While they are characterized by this perspective on the realities of society, they live with the conviction that God will bring about a new creation in the future in which the issues we face today will no longer find their place. This attitude leads to a realistic approach to the world, but at the same time it generates a hope that God's intervention in the workings of this world will eradicate evil as it manifests itself now. If we are to refer to Ernst Troeltsch (2009, 85), a respected Protestant theologian and philosopher of culture, talking about how Christianity has influenced social life, he says that the model implemented by the Apostle Paul's theological ideas about relating to social problems is a very good example until the advent of the modern age. He observes that religion is undergoing a spectacular transformation, marked by a shift from religious doctrines to an ethical religion with redemptive values, which implies embracing an ethical and universal ideal that transcends social conditions. On the other hand, the whole world, the whole universe is placed under God's guidance, despite the evil that exists. And this makes everything that happens socially ordained by God. Troeltsch also says that while proposing the living of an ideal that transcends this world, the apostle Paul also promotes an obedience to social ordinances. The fundamental element that holds everything in balance has to do with God's role in this world. He makes his point when he says that through Christianity social life is influenced in two ways: one having to do with the postulating of a transcendental ideal and the other with the way in which love manifests itself, namely through submission to the social order or hostility to it.

Schreiner sees a close relationship between the present and the future when he says "the future world of righteousness is also the ultimate and final reality" and focuses in his study on five aspects of the social world that mark New Testament theology, among them: wealth and poverty, the role of women, marriage, divorce and children, the relationship with state authorities, and slavery (Schreiner 2011, 816-862). This kind of reporting has led to ideological conflicts because Paul's advice (Schreiner 2020, 317) does not promote an escapist view of life, but an assumed one, in which we are responsible in all areas of life's influence, except that "those who understand that the present age is passing quickly will have a new perspective on all events" (Schreiner 2020, 317). Another source of conflict is that in the New Testament period, the Gospel of Christ penetrated all social strata of the Roman Empire. There was no social class that was not touched by this Gospel that demanded a change in the social perception and role of the Christian in society. Holland, a noted historian, describes the missionary eschatological vision of the apostle Paul, saying:

> Paul's conviction that the only true citizenship was that of Heaven was matched by his determination to exploit the manifestations of earthly authority as effectively as he was able. If the synagogues offered him a chance to win his fellow Jews to Christ, then he would take it. If the householders of Corinth or Rome provided him with financial support and meeting places for various converts and funds to help fight the famine in Judea, he would take full advantage of their generosity. If Roman power guaranteed the peace that allowed him to travel the world, then he was not going to jeopardise his

> mission by encouraging his converts to rebel against it. There was too much at stake. There was no time to build a new structure of society. What mattered, in the short window of opportunity Paul had been given, was to plant as many churches as possible and thereby prepare the world for the parousia (Holland 2022, 111).

For an understanding of Christian eschatology, it is extremely important to note the balanced approach that the apostle Paul shows when he understands that its primary objective is to prepare the world for the *parousia*. With this goal in mind we see that he combines the eschatological expectation with the action of preparing society for the culminating moment of history as he envisioned it. From this point of view, Paul cannot be understood as a social activist, eager to change the foundations of the Roman society in which he lived, but rather to prepare the world and the church for the encounter with Jesus Christ. Paul's missionary strategy is rather a pragmatic one in which he aims to use the resources and social structures of the Roman Empire to achieve his theological goal of the *parousia*. This is why we do not see the apostle Paul as committed against a reformation of the power structure of the time, but rather we see him as one who takes advantage of the opportunities offered to him to spread the Gospel. The way the apostle aims to bring about transformation by working is through the church or through human communities rather than being in direct conflict with the power structures of the time. In a hostile climate, the apostle Paul's eschatology seems to have this goal, where social structures are influenced from within as people experience the new birth. The social context of the Roman Empire was profoundly affected by the penetration of the Gospel of Christ (Martin 1986, 110).

Senatorial and equestrian orders = upper class
Decurions and local oligarchs = the lower underclass of the upper class
Highly successful artisans (merchants, craftsmen, etc.) with aspirations to achieve decurion status = lower middle class

---

Medium-successful artisans etc.; e.g. most household owners = middle class
Employed artisans or tenants etc. = lower middle class

Slaves = lower classes
Farmers = lower classes
Beggars = lower classes

This Gospel, with its profound eschatological character, managed to penetrate the whole structure of Roman society and to propose to the new converts a new perspective which was not so much linked to the social or economic status of the person concerned, but to an ethic rooted in a future world in which relations between people would be determined by the expression which the apostle Paul uses so successfully. “In Christ” is found the whole of redeemed humanity (Oprean 2021, 133). From this point of view, the Gospel has not only brought about a change in an individual, but also a reconfiguration of the existing social structure that has often led to tension and conflict, but at the same time, it has also opened up the prospects of a society that can function on different principles.

Christian identity and social life

The idea that the apostle Paul proposes in a revolutionary way to give believers an eschatological identity is that of adoption (Gal. 4:5; Rom. 8:15, 23; 9:4; Eph. 1:5). A term with a whole socio-cultural history (Burke 2001; Heim 2017) that aims to integrate new converts into the wider church family as they risk their future by embracing new Christian beliefs. Adoption was a procedure in the Roman world, particularly of the upper classes, whereby children were welcomed and integrated into the new family, with them having

equal rights to existing family members. The Apostle Paul uses this metaphor understanding very well the social challenges of converts and the danger of them becoming no-one's. Therefore, through this metaphor, he emphasizes that through Christ they are integrated into the wider community of the church, but also that the Apostle Paul understands the change of status they underwent when they were converted. For the apostle, it is important that they are anchored in a future reality; therefore, if we consider the metaphor of adoption in this eschatological context, we are talking about people who are promised not only earthly life but also heavenly life, towards which they must look. If we are to look at it sociologically, the metaphor of adoption is meant to convey to those who have been separated by conversion from their families that they belong to a community, and on a much deeper level, in a class-divided Roman society, the theology behind adoption shows that, in fact, there are no ethnic or social differences in God's thinking. Despite the apostle Paul's efforts, the social identities specific to Roman society cannot be annulled, but on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ, the apostle aims to offer believers in the Christian churches scattered throughout the Roman Empire a different identity perspective (Wehrle 2016, 34) that gives them a sense of belonging to Christ's Church on earth and in heaven (Rotaru 2012, 5).

Conclusions

The eschatology of the early Christian century revealed a complex web of religious, social, political, and economic factors (Rotaru 2006, 251-266; 2014, 532-541). In a significant way, eschatology changed the way the Christian community related to earthly realities, but it also gave rise to a tension that was observed at the social level, which brought to the fore a conflict with eschatological understandings specific to that period. Out of this confrontation, new visions were born because, at this time, Jewish eschatology focused on a restoration of the Jewish nation, while imperial eschatology brought to the fore a social hierarchy and stability in the Empire. All the while, motivated by anticipation of the future, the Christian church sought to shape social realities in light of the *parousia*. It proposed a supernatural dimension in relating people to the future as opposed to other eschatologies which were oriented towards earthly goals. It was also Christian eschatology that led to the formation of a distinct identity and had as its foundation the role of the Christian community in the world. The Apostle Paul demonstrates how it can shape social realities (Măcelaru 2016, 67-83), when he promotes through his message the role of Christ in the life of the believer, but also the value that the church can have in establishing a new identity. Therefore, by analyzing the eschatology of the first century, we learn how important it is to understand the role of the community, but also the role of the believer in relation to society (Rotaru 2017, 57–76).

References

Balsdon, John Percy Vyvian Dacre. 1979. *Romans and Aliens*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Burke, Trevor. 2001. "Pauline adoption: a sociological approach." *Evangelical Quarterly: An International Review of Bible and Theology* 73(2):119–134.

Caemmerer, Richard. 1961. "Kerygma and Didache in Christian Education." *Concordia Theological Monthly* 32(4): 5–16.

Erikson, Millard J. 2004. *Teologie creştină [Christian Theology]*. Oradea: Cartea Creștină.

Fredriksen, Paula. 2023. *Pe când creștinii erau evrei: Prima generatie*. Bucharest: Humanitas Publishing House.

Heim, Erin M. 2017. *Adoption in Galatians and Romans:Contemporary Metaphor Theories and the Pauline Huiothesia Metaphors*. Leiden: Brill.

Holland, Tom. *Creștinismul. Istoria unei idei și a modului în care aceasta ne-a modelat lumea [Dominion: The Making of the Western Mind]*. Bucharest: Litera Publishing House.

J.H.Wright, Christopher. *Misiunea lui Dumnezeu. Înțelegerea metanarațiunii Bibliei [The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*]. Bucharest/Oradea: Pleroma/Casa Cărții Publishing House.

Măcelaru, Marcel. 2011. "The Role of the Bible in Shaping Cultural Identities." In *Humanity after Selfish Prometheus. Chances of Dialogue and Ethics in a Technicized World*, Theologie Ost–West. Europäische Perspektiven 15, edited by Janez Juhant and Bojan Žalec, 167-173. Berlin: LIT Verlag.

Măcelaru, Marcel. 2012. *Discursul etno-național în Biblia Ebraică. Repere metodologice în analiza narațiunilor istoriografice veterotestamentare [Ethno-national discourse in the Hebrew Bible. Methodological landmarks in the analysis of Old Testament historiographical narratives]*. Bucharest: Universitară Publishing House.

Măcelaru, Marcel. 2016. "The Bible, Christian Existence and Mission." In *Mission in Central and Eastern Europe: Realities, Perspectives, Trends*, edited by Corneliu Constantineanu, Marcel V. Măcelaru, Anne-Marie Kool, M. Himcinschi, Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series 34:67-83. Oxford: Regnum.

Măcelaru, Marcel. 2018. "Natura teologică a narațiunilor Vechiului Testament [The theological nature of Old Testament narratives]. In *Dialogul dintre exegeză și teologie în predicarea biblică (The dialogue between exegesis and theology in biblical preaching),* edited by Daniel G. Oprean 27-34. Timișoara: Vest Publishing House.

Martin, Thomas William. 1986. "Eschatology, History and Mission in the Experience of Lucan Christians: A Sociological Study of the Relationship between Ideas and Social Realities in Luke-Acts." PhD diss., St. Peter's College Oxford.

Mocan, Beneamin and Dragoș Ștefănică. 2010. "Biserica – o comunitate eshatologică: note exegetice asupra eshatologiei epistolei 1 Tesaloniceni [The Church - an eschatological community: exegetical notes on the eschatology of 1 Thessalonians]. *Plērōma* XII, 2: 69-90.

Moltmann, Jürgen.1967. *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology*. San Francisco: HarperCollins.

Moț, Laurențiu Florentin. 2022. *Apropierea și Întârzierea Parusiei. Un studiu despre Așteptarea Sfârșitului în Istoria Bisericii, în Teologie și în Sfânta Scriptură [The Approach and Delay of the Parousia. A Study of the Waiting for the End in Church History, Theology and Scripture]*. Cernica: Adventus University Publishing.

Oprean, Daniel G. 2014. "Koinonia ca mod al participării Bisericii în cele trei oficii ale lui Hristos [Koinonia as a way of the Church's participation in the three offices of Christ]." In Runcan, P., Runcan, R. (coord.), *Colecția Puterea de a fi altfel [The Power of Being Different Collection],* vol. 5: *Puterea de a fi altfel [The Power of Being Different]*. Bucharest: Didactică și Pedagogică Publishing House.

Oprean, Daniel G. 2021. "Revisiting the concept of *Koinonia:* Dimensions of Pauline's Theology of Communion." In *ConScienS Conference Proceedings.*

Petry, Ray C. 1956. *Christian Eschatology and Social Thought: A Historical Essay on the Social Implications of Some Selected Aspects in Christian Eschatology to A. D. 1500*. New York: Abingdon Press.

Rheenen, Gailyn Van. 1996. *Missions: Biblical Foundations and Contemporary Strategies*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

Rotaru, Ioan-Gheorghe. 2006. "Aspecte ale secularizării şi ale omului secularizat" [Aspects of secularisation and secularised man]. *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai, Theologia Orthodoxa* L-LI, 1: 251-266.

Rotaru, Ioan-Gheorghe. 2012. "Biserica lui Dumnezeu, sursa unui Râu al Vieţii şi al Vindecării" [The Church of God, Source of a River of Life and Healing]. *Argeşul Orthodox* XI, 564:5.

Rotaru, Ioan-Gheorghe. 2014. "Globalization and its effect on religion." *Journal for Freedom of Conscience* 1 (1): 532-541.

Rotaru, Ioan-Gheorghe. 2017. "Misiunea Bisericii în societate" [The Mission of the Church in Society]. *Timotheus-Incursiuni Istorice* 4 (2): 57–76.

Schreiner, Thomas R. 2011. *Teologia Noului Testament: Măreţia lui Dumnezeu în Cristos [New Testament Theology]*. Translated by Pantea, Dorin and Moga, Dinu. Oradea: Făclia Publishing House.

Troeltsch, Ernst. 2009. *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches,* vol.1. Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press.

Walls, Jerry L. (ed.). 2010. *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Wehrle, Christopher Frederick. 2016. "Adoption and the Formation of Eschatological Identity: An Exegetical Study of Huiothesia." PhDdiss. The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. http://hdl.handle.net/10392/5260.

Witherington III, Ben.1995. *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Witherington III, Ben. 1998.*The Acts of the Apostles*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Witherington III, Ben. 2020. *Paul, Apostle of God's Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology*. Westmont: InterVarsity Press.

Wright, N.T. 2020. *Pavel. Apostolul lui Iisus Mesia [Paul. Apostle of Jesus the Messiah]*. Sibiu: Deisis Publishing House.